

# **ANT- PATH**

**JOHN M. BENNETT**



# ANTPATH

Poems, etc.  
by  
John M. Bennett

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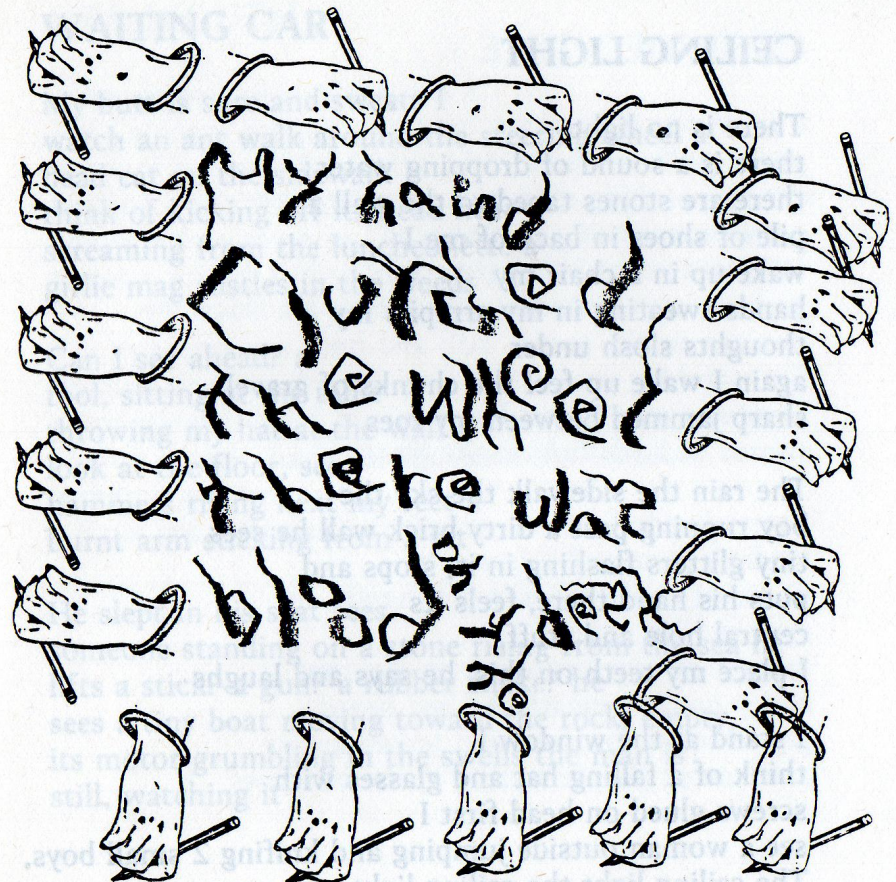
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## CEILING LIGHT

There is no light  
there is a sound of dropping water  
there are stones taped to the wall a  
pile of shoes in back of me I  
wake up in a chair my  
hands sweating in my armpits my  
thoughts slosh under  
again I wake up feel the chunks of gravel  
sharp jammed between my toes

The rain the sidewalk the sky the  
boy running past a dirty brick wall he sees  
tiny glitters flashing in it, stops and  
puts his hand there, feels its  
central hole and stuff,  
I place my teeth on this, he says and laughs

I stand at the window I  
think of a falling hat and glasses with  
screws glued on head first I  
see a woman outside jumping and knifing 2 small boys,  
The ceiling light the ceiling light, she screams

My son is missing in the streets my  
cleaver in his coat I  
walk out to the shopping center  
some shouting at the mall's far end I see a  
girl running around a driedup planter he's  
chasing her, blood on his face, his hands are gone

## WAITING CAR

My butt is sore and sweats I  
watch an ant walk around the steering wheel a  
dead cat on the sidewalk I  
think of kicking off its head hear  
screaming from the luncheonette a  
girlie mag rustles in the weeds

Can I see ahead? a  
fool, sitting at the table  
throwing my hat at the wall I  
look at the floor, see  
hammers rising next my feet a  
burnt arm sticking from a pit

He slept in his seat sees  
someone standing on a stone rising from the sea he  
lifts a stick? a gun? a rubber snake? he  
sees a tiny boat moving toward the rock, empty,  
its motor grumbling in the swells the man is  
still, watching it



## CROWDED TIME

I stood out in the alley next a  
power pole saw a  
car approaching slow and quiet heard a  
crow pronouncing in a tree  
Why'm I here? I thought; the  
garbage cans are empty the weeds are thick my  
feet are on the gravel, still and hot,  
I'm watching the car, its  
bumper aimed at my knees a  
swarm of birds behind the glass

I went inside I was  
reading Time and Life saw a  
photo of charred heads and hands, my  
eyes swelled shut I  
dreamt of water running on the roof  
soggy books beneath the bed heard  
pounding at the door and jerked awake  
saw hatted people staring in the windows

## HER MOUTH

A bus is parked in the street I  
see a woman getting on I  
think of her walking in the aisle, she's  
looking out a window, sees me staring at her with my  
hands before my eyes "Who's he?" she thinks and  
raises a mirror to her lips

I'm in a dark sea I'm  
holding to a beachball, see  
some islands, black jagged teeth rising from the dusk,  
I'm on a rock that's just beneath the surface  
a man is swimming around me  
I must get to the islands before it's night



## NOT IN THE HALL

I see a man with saws for arms he's  
standing at the doorless end of a hall a  
pile of sticks and pipends slumps in a corner  
I ask him "Where's the office?"  
he stares at his feet he waves his saws he  
looks at me his eyes whirling in his head

I turn around and walk away I  
think of heat ducts ticking past my hat,  
try to see a door ahead, it opens, a  
lawnmower roars on the sill

I'll be heading to the office I'll  
be reaching for the knob I'll  
be thinking what to say I'll  
be sweating my hands in my pockets I'll  
be looking for my watch I'll  
be asking for my seat my  
sheaf of paper my heavy keys  
she'll be fumbling in a drawer she'll be  
lifting a knife she'll be starting to scream

He'll be standing below a light the  
hall will stretch out into dark he'll be  
licking his furry teeth he'll be  
wanting to light a match he'll be  
thinking of freeways, beaches, TV shows;  
he'll lift one foot he'll tilt his head  
he'll stay like that, staring at the pulsing bulb

## BLANK FRIDGE

I was nesting I was trying to wake I  
was tilting in the kitchen the  
fridge swelling, water oozing out the base I  
heard my wife jerk in bed and  
felt her fluid breasts pressed against my back

I dreamed me in a camera store saw  
wolves pacing on the counters, a laugh? a scream?  
from behind the shelves I tried to leave I  
saw trucks with knives for lights where the door should be

I was standing on a cliff the  
night quiet boomed around I  
start to speak my waspps zip to the void I  
think of a river mirrored blue beneath the trees my  
face rises from it, tongue throbbing and slick



## BURIED ROOF

I was squatting in a basement my  
eyes were blurred and pressed into my  
head I hunching, belly squeezed against my belt I  
start to sleep, my feet are  
backward the floor is inside out I'm  
tasting mud between my teeth

I was placing hammers in a circle I  
was trying to see with them for eyes I  
was standing near their center,  
thought of time in lines drifting past me  
through my wheel, outside my skull

Down below are soldiers leaning on a wall I  
pull my finger toward my chest I  
see a head explode I  
start to move my tongueless shoes,  
looking for a tree that will hide me

she'll be fumbling in a drawer she'll be  
lifting a knife she'll be starting to scream

He'll be standing below a light the  
hall will stretch out into dark he'll be  
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thinking of freeways, beaches, TV shows.  
he'll lift one foot he'll tilt his head  
he'll stay like that, staring at the pulsing bulb

NO time he cofs  
lying on the floor  
sucking up the  
cat hair mites  
dandruff - a motion



I'm brushing my teeth with  
do remain in leaning  
back in the tub & taking  
a pee I'm thinking of  
eatin' my out 2 straight  
out my azz & speakin'  
a bloody tan @ u @

The paper swarms  
a face stick out  
the it coffz, the  
the the the the

I'm staring out the smeared window  
I'm opening the door I'm  
placing my feet in the mud I  
look at the house on the hill its  
roof crawling with worms I  
stand with the cardoor behind me  
lights in the town down there,  
writhing in the redlit dust



## SEA DREAM

A tiny island drifts low past I  
lean against the rail my  
foot stuck stiff out over white  
bubbles boiling through the green I  
close my eyes I'm in the  
engine room my hand held flat above a  
thick spinning mirror shaft

My eyes are shut and glued I'm  
flailing at a high sharp buzz I'm  
tasting where I was, sweating in my  
armpits and thighs, a long dark pool I'm  
falling in I see C. standing at the edge I'm  
groaning, trying to call she's slapping my ears my  
shoes are backward dark shapes bolt between my legs I  
start to cough I'm heading for the ladder

## WORM ON THE BRIDGE

I was all day on the freeway grey  
field thrumming toward me  
bright teeth flash up smash past I  
stopped on a bridge I  
stilled there throbbing.  
outside are low grey buildings  
tanks smoking on the roofs a  
man in metal boots crawls up one and  
starts to walk in my direction  
I flat my hand on my face

I see a house far up a hill I'm  
walking toward it, stop next to a rusting car its  
wheels stuck in rocks I  
think I'm in there, sleeping on the back seat

I'm staring out the smearedup window  
I'm opening the door I'm  
placing my feet in the mud I  
look at the house on the hill its  
roof crawling with worms I  
stand with the cardoor behind me  
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writhing in the redlit dust



## CIRCLE OF CHAIR

He sat with his pants down staring at a  
mirrored filing cabinet the  
windows steamed and dripped a  
red light glowing in the calculator he  
thought about a circular saw  
turning it on and listening all day

In a room with grit beneath my soles the  
door the door it's shut I try to  
open my eyes they're water  
flowing down my throat I think of  
walls to my left with scratches,  
to my right full of empty holes a  
glow is forcing through the doorcrack I  
turn around I'm seeing an enormous mirror my  
flesh on backward the light is swelling

He was staring at the wheel rug circles  
throbbing out from dark central space  
the morning wormed on his crawling skin

I place my hand on the wall feel  
ridges there, veins pulsing beneath my  
fingers I slide my feet I  
think of sinks drifting in bottomless air I  
touch a switch I'm  
wanting to click it but I don't

He was falling he was limping on the ground he  
was standing he was walking toward the street he  
was seeing his flopping shoe his wrinkled cuff he  
stopped at an alley saw a block of ice smoking in a  
shaft of light a charred ladder far above  
across the rooftops

## HIDING A HAMMER

I was laughing I was  
staring at a windowshade I was not laughing I  
was reaching out my hand I was  
putting my finger through a hole and  
feeling the wet cold glass, wind  
slicing past the house I  
thought of stairs circling beneath my feet my  
uncut finger pressed against a blade

He was parked before the liquor store he was  
seeing three men sleeping by a wall sun  
stabbed his eye pale clouds  
throbbled around the clock on the dash

A hammer in my pocket I'm walking to the  
grocery store I'm seeing  
shopping carts roll away in front of me I  
stand before the peanut butter, think of  
breaking glass and steel sunk in glop,  
in the checkout line I watch a  
woman's sweaty hair, she's pounding at the keys



## ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

He'll be standing high on a ladder  
in his fingertips splinters a  
wind pulling at his back he'll be  
looking through the glass he'll  
see an empty table a chair whirling before it a  
column of smoke standing above the empty boards

He's crouching in a room with  
4 black walls he stares to the north he  
sees a concrete tree with  
arms hanging from the leaves he  
stares to the east: a wall of ice with  
hands glinting beneath the surface he's  
whirling to the west he sees a hole with  
lights and shouting deep inside it; to the  
south to the south he sees a giant chair  
burning, a dog sleeping and twitching beneath it

He was sleeping he was  
pressing his butt in the sofa he was  
clawing in his dream at the ceiling he was  
trying to wake he was  
seeing a lurching highway  
holes and cracks speeding beneath him

He was falling he was limping on the ground he  
was standing he was walking toward the street he  
was seeing his flopping shoe his wrinkled cuff he  
stopped at an alley saw a block of ice smoking in a  
shaft of light a charred ladder far above  
across the rooftops

## HORSE DREAM

I was sleeping in the back seat I  
was dreaming of a line of buried bowls a  
pocket knife in each I  
heard the wind hissing past the doors the  
shuddering blast of passing trucks a  
siren yuyulating up close and away I  
start awake see  
insects crawling on the hood  
dust sifting down the glass

I stood out on the asphalt saw  
trees burning on a hill a  
woman running down it naked  
"My shirt my shirt" she screams some  
dogs are leaping past her  
twisting and biting at their backs

That night I watched TV saw  
streams of hair and clotted dust blown out  
rigid from the screen my  
wife was scoffing at my side  
"What's it mean?" "It's this" she said  
holding up a can of horsemeat dogfood



## ANT PATH

I was yanking off the covers  
she was huddled up and shivered  
I'm trying to cram the blankets in the foot  
she's leaping up and stomping for the stairs

I make the bed, I'm quiet,  
I listen to her anger in the  
light chain pulled the  
tighter scrape of chair and dropping shoe

Next AM I'm looking at a wall with  
windows painted on it a  
scene of beach with mounds of sand and  
windy trees I turn around and  
step up through the hissing doors of a bus

The grocery stores the savings and loans the  
gas the runners the man in the  
back seat with a carton of ant motels he's  
laughing, pointing to a crowd that stops the bus;  
I saw them crawling on the roofs,  
throwing off chairs,  
placing dogs in them,  
shrieking at the falling arffs

## FLOATING FLAME

I dreamed I was covered with dust and  
walking to the grocery store I  
went off up an alley to stare in  
yards and garbage cans the sun was  
high and cold the neighbourhood seemed empty  
I was listening to the air ticking in the branches

At the grocery store I saw a man with  
sunken pits for eyes he wore a  
blue shining hat "Sky" he said  
"My feet are sky"

That night I was poking at the  
furnace valves, thought of  
floating flames and rollaway my  
heat flying up to the pulsing black of sky  
I held my breath and for a second flashing  
put my head in there  
saw hot and blue deep inside my eyes



ANT PATH

FLOATING FLAME

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John M. Bennett, poet and word artist. Lots of books and chapbooks, among them these high points: *White Screen*, *Meat Watch*, *Nips Poems*, *Puking Horse*, *Time Release*, *Burning Dog*. Has exhibited word art everywhere. Edits *Lost and Found Times*, avant-garde writing and art magazine, and is Head of Luna Bisonte Prods, producer of plenty books and poetry products. Born in Chicago, 1942. Now infests Columbus, Ohio.



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